

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 14574

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR JA

SUBJ: OPPOSITION TO PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

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(B) TOKYO 13740

SUMMARY: DEVELOPMENTS SINCE LAST REPORT SUGGEST THAT OPPOSITION GROUPS, WHILE STILL PLANNING MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS DURING PRESIDENTIAL VISIT, ARE HAMPERED BY INTERNAL DISUNITY AND INABILITY TO GENERATE POPULAR REACTION AGAINST PRESIDENT'S TRIP. NO ONE IS NOW TALKING OF REPEATING 1960 EXPERIENCE AND, DESPITE ONGOING CONTROVERSY OVER NUCLEAR ISSUE AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL TENSIONS, FROM US VIEWPOINT, ATMOSPHERE FOR PRESIDENTIAL VISIT SEEMS MORE FAVORABLE THAN TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO. MAJOR OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES ARE LIKELY TO BE PEACEFUL ONES AND, WHILE RADICAL STUDENTS CONTINUE TO REQUIRE CLOSE SCRUTINY, OUR ASSESSMENT CONTINUES TO BE THAT OPPOSITION MOVEMENT DOES NOT INTEND TO ATTEMPT TO PREVENT SUCCESSFUL VISIT.
END SUMMARY.

1. ON NOVEMBER 7, KOMEITO FORMALLY ANNOUNCED DECISION TO
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WITHDRAW FROM PARTICIPATION IN UNIFIED ANTI-PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH KOMEITO HAD EARLIER JOINED OCTOBER 21 ANTI-WAR DAY RALLIES AND HAD GIVEN QUALIFIED SUPPORT TO OPPOSITION MOVEMENT, THE PARTY SPOKESMAN SAID POLICY SHIFT WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE ANTI-FORD STAND VIOLATED PARTY TENETS OF "EQUIDISTANT DIPLOMACY" AND NEUTRALITY. EVEN THOUGH KOMEITO PARTICIPATION IN ANTI-VISIT MOVEMENT WAS LIKELY TO BE MINIMAL ANYWAY, PARTY'S ACTION IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT WEAKENS OPPOSITION CLAIM TO BROAD-BASED SUPPORT. MOREOVER, AMONG FIVE POLITICAL PARTIES, IT LEAVES JSP IN UNEASY COMPANY WITH JCP AS ONLY TWO NOW AGAINST PRESIDENT'S TRIP.

2. WHILE JSP IS STILL COMMITTED TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST PRESIDENT, IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT SOCIALIST PERFORMANCE, WHILE OF MAJOR PROPORTION, IS LIKELY TO BE SOMEWHAT RESTRAINED. IN NOVEMBER 5 PRESS CONFERENCE, SECGEN ISHIBASHI SAID "WE ARE OPPOSED TO VISIT, BUT WILL NOT BLOCK IT." THEN, AFTER RECITATION OF GRIEVANCES, CENTERING ON ALLEGED STRENGTHENING OF MILITARY ALLIANCE, HE ADDED THAT JSP HAD NO DESIRE TO HARM US-JAPAN RELATIONS AND WAS EVEN CONSIDERING SENDING ITS OWN MISSION TO US. ISHIBASHI'S LOW-KEY STATEMENTS LEND CREDENCE TO VIEW THAT JSP DOES NOT REALLY HAVE HEART IN CAMPAIGN AND VIEWS IT IN LARGE PART AS OBLIGATORY EXERCISE NECESSITATED BY SOCIALISTS' PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS AND DANGER THAT JCP COULD SEIZE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN CAMPAIGN.

3. JCP, OF COURSE, IS STILL GOING FORWARD WITH MAJOR OPPOSITION EFFORT AND, IN CONJUNCTION WITH SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS GENSUIKYO, HAS SPONSORED VARIETY OF PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES, CONFERENCES AND RALLIES AIMED AT BUILDING UP MOVEMENT WHICH WILL PEAK DURING PRESIDENT'S STAY IN JAPAN. HOWEVER, LOCAL POLITICAL OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO STRESS FACT JCP LEADERS WILL, WITH COMING ELECTIONS AND PARTY IMAGE IN MIND, BE SCRUPULOUS IN AVOIDING USE OF VIOLENT TACTICS.

4. DESPITE STILL SIMMERING CONTROVERSY OVER ALLEGED INTRODUCTION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCERNIBLE BUILD UP OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT AGAINST PRESIDENTIAL VISIT. MOST RECENT POLL BY SANKEI NEWSPAPER SHOWS 51 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS ACTIVELY WELCOME VISIT AND ONLY 7 PERCENT EXPRESS OPPOSITION. OUR OWN SUBJECTIVE FEELING IS THAT MAJORITY OF JAPANESE BELIEVE THAT

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BECAUSE INTERNATIONAL COURTESY REQUIRES IT, BECAUSE FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD BE PROMOTED, AND BECAUSE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT IS LONG-PENDING ISSUE, PRESIDENT SHOULD BE WELCOMED HERE. DEMOS AND RALLIES ARE DRAWING SMALL CROWDS. TEN DAYS BEFORE PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL, THERE HAVE BEEN NO DEMONSTRATIONS DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AT EMBASSY AND GRANDIOSE PLAN OF SURROUNDING PRE-ADVANCE PARTY AT AIRPORT A LA HAGERTY FIZZLED. LACK OF SPONTANEOUS PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST VISIT

AND INABILITY TO WHIP UP PUBLIC SENTIMENT, PREOCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS, AND DISUNITY IN OPPOSITION CAMP ARE ALL, NO DOUBT, FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASINGLY MODEST ASSESSMENT OF WHAT LEFTISTS THINK THEY CAN ACCOMPLISH DURING PRESIDENT FORD'S STAY. HARDLY ANYONE IS NOW TALKING ABOUT MOVEMENT TO RIVAL THAT OF 1960.

5. PRESS HAS STILL MADE NO EDITORIAL COMMENT ON VISIT, ALTHOUGH IT HAS PROVIDED SUBSTANTIAL COVERAGE TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF TRIP SUCH AS CONTEMPLATED ITINERARY, JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND ARRIVAL OF ADVANCE PARTY. WHILE COVERAGE HAS BEEN LIMITED TO STRAIGHT NEWS REPORTING, GOOD DEAL OF COMMENT HAS BEEN WORKED INTO STORIES TO EFFECT THAT MUCH GLITTER HAS BEEN REMOVED AND SHADOW CAST OVER VISIT BY VARIETY OF FACTORS - NUCLEAR ISSUE, PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES, ONWARD TRAVEL TO ROK AND USSR, U.S. ELECTION RETURNS, AND FACT MRS. FORD NOT ACCOMPANYING PRESIDENT. AT SAME TIME THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUGGESTIONS THAT TRIP SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE. INDEED, EMBASSY CONTACTS TELL US MOST PRESS PEOPLE SHARE VIEW THAT VISIT SHOULD BE SUCCESSFUL ONE AND THAT UNTOWARD INCIDENTS WOULD DAMAGE JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT PRESS LINE IN ADVANCE, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD EDITORIALS SUPPORTING VISIT AND REMINDING JAPANESE OF OBLIGATORY GOOD MANNERS ARE LIKELY IN DAYS AHEAD.

6. RUNDOWN OF SPECIFIC RALLIES, DEMOS AND STRIKES IS BEING REPORTED BY SEPTEL. IT SEEMS WORTH NOTING HERE, HOWEVER, THAT MAJOR RALLIES ARE SCHEDULED IN TOKYO DAY BEFORE PRESIDENT ARRIVES AND AGAIN IN TOKYO (21ST) WHEN PRESIDENT WILL BE IN KYOTO. NOT ONLY DO TIMING AND LOCATION OF RALLIES AVOID IMPRESSION OF DIRECT CONFRONTATION, BUT AMONG SLOGANS TO BE PROMOTED, OPPOSITION TO PRESIDENT RECEIVES THIRD BILLING AFTER DEMANDS FOR PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION AND CONVENING OF CONFIDENTIAL

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EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION. LESSER RALLIES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES SUCH AS HANDBILL DISTRIBUTION AND PROTEST MEETINGS ARE SCHEDULED, BUT NONE OF THESE SEEM LIKELY TO DISTURB VISIT. POTENTIAL FOR PROBLEMS INVOLVING RADICAL STUDENT AND YOUTH GROUPS, OF COURSE, REMAINS, AND SECURITY AUTHORITIES ARE CAREFULLY MONITORING THEIR PLANS, BOTH FOR PUBLIC DEMOS AND SO-CALLED GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES. PAST PERFORMANCES LEAD TO CONCLUSION THAT SUCH GROUPS WILL TAKE TO STREETS; SO FAR, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE BEEN SUBDUED AND HAVE AVOIDED CONFRONTATIONS WITH POLICE.

7. IN SUM, SINCE EARLIER REPORTS ON OPPOSITION TO VISIT, ATMOSPHERE APPEARS SOMEWHAT IMPROVED. THERE IS NO PREVAILING PUBLIC MOOD AGAINST PRESIDENT'S TRIP, AND OPPOSITION FORCES ARE PLAGUED BY DISUNITY. ALL MAJOR OPPOSING GROUPS ARE

COMMITTED TO ORDERLY DEMONSTRATIONS, AND TALK OF A REPEAT 1960
HAS BEEN ABANDONED. THERE SEEMS TO BE CONSENSUS AMONG PARTIES,
PRESS AND PUBLIC AT LARGE THAT COURTEOUS RECEPTION IS IN
ORDER AND THAT INCIDENTS WOULD BE HARMFUL TO JAPANESE IMAGE
IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. RADICAL YOUTH MAY STILL CAUSE
PROBLEMS AND ANTI-PRESIDENTIAL VISIT DEMOS WILL OCCUR, BUT WE
CONTINUE TO BELIEVE NONE OF THIS CAN PREVENT SUCCESSFUL VISIT.
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